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ABSTRACT

Nontraditional education is based on three basic tenets: (1) a student should have responsibility for, and control over, his own education; (2) a student's education should be directed toward the acquisition of competencies rather than the accumulation of credits; and (3) traditional limits of time and space should not constrict student development. It can be carried out on a formal campus, or on no campus at all. It can provide college credit, or no credit at all. Although it stresses student determination of his own goals, it provides for competent teacher supervision. It allows for flexible grouping and scheduling, independent study, continuous progress curricula, hands-on experience, and community internships. There are at least two methods by which the leader of a state or regional community college system can stimulate the capacity for change and the capabilities for introducing nontraditional approaches to instruction. The first method entails the establishment of system-wide goals and objectives that will require some reorganization within the college, the classroom, and the curriculum. The second method involves establishing a nontraditional unit within the system. Such a unit is a Metropolitan Community Colleges' proposed fourth college, a college without walls which will encompass all existing community services programs and activities currently offered by the existing three District colleges. (Author/NHM)

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# STATE LEVEL LEADERSHIP IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF NON-TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

BY

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I suppose I have always been aware, at least subconsciously, that great similarity exists between the role of a state director of community colleges and that of a chancellor of a regional community college district. But it was not until I assumed the latter position in Kansas City the first of last October that I became acutely aware of the similarity. Though a chancellor's responsibilities for encouraging educational change that will best assist in the learning process don't encompass as many colleges as a state director's, the nature of the responsibilities is very nearly the same.

As you may know, the Junior College District of Metropolitan Kansas City, Missouri, exists in four counties in the metropolitan area, and operates three community colleges: Penn Valley Community College, located near the District Offices in midtown Kansas City; Longview Community College,

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20 miles to the south; and Maple Woods Community College, 20 miles to the north. These colleges are by no means cut from a conventional mold, nor are they imitative of one another. Each has its own president and having developed its own distinctive characteristics, its own hallmark. Quite rightfully, each college guards these diversities jealously.

As primary change agents in our respective jurisdictions, perhaps our greatest challenge as system leaders lies in our ability to foster diversity, creativity, and initiative on the part of our local colleges and, at the same time, to guarantee excellence of programs and services offered by each college without unnecessary duplication of effort.

The college communities which fall within our purview parallel those which form the political units of a federal system, where a territorially diversified pattern calls for two levels of government--one to deal with the common, the other with the territorially diverse (this similarity may also suggest a logical governance system). Thus, while federalism may have great importance in providing the opportunity for separate communities to organize themselves into larger unities while retaining a high degree of self determination, it is a process rather than a static design. And there is nothing in the distinction between federal and local that would imply an inherent superiority of one over the other. Where state departments of community college education or regional community college districts are concerned, what federalism does is to mobilize firmly entrenched local powers in support of system policies, yet offer them protection under regulations and standards.

While we share, as state director and chancellor, a multitude of ministerial and administrative functions, our primary responsibility is in goal setting and evaluation. Where do we want to go? (What are our goals

and objectives?) Did we get there? (How well are we accomplishing our goals and objectives?) We provide leadership, then through the evaluation of the results of system-wide goals and objectives.

Before we examine the means by which it may be possible to influence the introduction of nontraditional education into our colleges, it may be well to review the concept of nontraditionalism, and to examine areas of disagreement and consensus on what actually constitutes "nontraditional" education.

An acquaintance of mine, who hasn't much faith in any education that doesn't conform to the one he experienced, said shortly before I left Brookdale: "Erv, there's no such thing as 'nontraditional' education. All you fellows have done is remove the student from the other end of Mark Hopkin's log, substitute a carrel or a computer for the log, and put a cassette or a console in Mark's place. I grant you it's a new approach because it's technological. But can a cassette or a console inspire a student the way Mark Hopkins did?"

I had to admit that, taken at face value, his argument seemed to have merit. But I also explained to him that this aspect of instruction is only one small segment of what is more broadly known as "nontraditional education." Nontraditionalism, I told him, is more a phenomenon of methodology than of content. It is designed to minister to student bodies exclusively of college age and experience and background. It includes community service programs as well as associate degree programs. Its most basic tenets provide: (1) that the student should have responsibility for, and authority over, his own education; (2) that a student's education should be directed toward the acquisition of competencies rather than the accumulation of credits; and (3) that the "traditional" limitations of time and space should

not constrict student development. It can be carried out on a formal campus, or on no campus at all. It can provide college credit, or no credit at all. It stresses student determination of his own goals, identification of how he proposes to reach those goals, methods of evaluating how well he is progressing. But it also provides for competent teacher supervision of all his activities in the process of acquiring his education. It allows for flexible grouping and scheduling, independent study, continuous progress curricula, hands-on experience, community internships. But, most importantly, it stresses at least five aims of instruction that leading reform spokesmen are currently emphasizing:

1. Teach the structure of a discipline, rather than facts in curricular content areas, by focusing upon the general principles that enable one to explain or predict phenomena dealt with in those areas.[1]

2. Teach methods of inquiry or problem-solving thinking as those methods are employed within a given curricular area.[2]

3. Teach competencies in independent study so that students become capable of planning and conducting their own learning activities.[3]

4. Set standards of excellence for mastery, holding all students to whatever levels of accomplishment correspond to those standards, and suiting the learning task, methods of instruction, and rate of advancement to the student's learning characteristics.[4]

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[1]John I. Goodlad, et al., The Changing School Curriculum (New York: The Fund for the Advancement of Education, 1966), 122 pp.

[2]Jerome S. Bruner, The Process of Education (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960), 97 pp.

[3]Glen Heathers, The Strategy of Educational Reform (New York: New York University, School of Education, Nov., 1961, mimeo.).

[4]John W. Gardner, Excellence (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 171 pp.

5. Individualize instruction through programs of studies tailored to a student's needs and capabilities, whether through independent study, a tutorial relation with a teacher, working cooperatively with other students, or studying in groups of varying size with lectures or discussions conducted by a teacher.[5]

Nontraditional education also provides for instruction by persons who perform--not merely by persons who teach.

Given a long-established state or regional system, it cannot be assumed that local educational leaders will always be enthusiastic about changing their approaches to instruction. Complacency grown out of habit is hard to dislodge, and to do so requires a special kind of leadership. It is one thing to build a new college, with no entrenched traditions to uproot; it is quite another to introduce what, on the surface, appear to be heretical practices within a rigid framework. Therefore, it is most necessary that, as the Bible suggests, we "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind" (Rom. xiv:5).

To effectuate such persuasion is a real test of educational leadership, which is the primary role assigned to the administrator of any regional or state system. Such leadership requires the authority to set goals and standards and to control the means of evaluation, and as Peter Drucker pointed out (Age of Discontinuity) this responsibility must not be delegated downward. Such leadership also requires a broad understanding of the processes of human behavior which, in practice, implies the need for dynamic

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[5]Nelson B. Henry, ed., Individualizing Instruction. Sixty-first Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 337 pp.

leader-group relationships. It is not the "man with all the answers" but the man who knows how to find the answers to problems as they arise who is most successful as an educational leader. Educational leadership, in fact, is a cooperative enterprise--a working together, under professional guidance, of all those involved in creating and perpetuating a viable institution of higher learning. It demands a continuous and consistent two-way communication system which builds mutual knowledge, mutual understanding, and mutual confidence. The leader-administrator who does not set himself apart by making directives his principal means of communication with his subordinates is the administrator who enjoys the active support, the enthusiastic loyalty, and the beneficial creativity of those among whom and over whom his leadership is exercised.

How, then should the leader of a state or regional system go about stimulating in the local colleges the capacity for change--the capabilities for introducing nontraditional approaches to instruction? I would like to discuss with you today, two ways--both related to the goal-setting functions:

The first approach entails the establishment of system-wide goals and objectives that will require some reorganization within the college, the classroom, and the curriculum. "Nontraditional education" is a very broad term, subject to multiple interpretations. Some of the innovations which characterize it have already been cited--and these by no means constitute an exhaustive list. All are intended to promote more productive learning. Thus, a college that is attempting to implement continuous progress curricula, for example, may be classified by some as "going nontraditional." But, unless the concept is being implemented for all students--not just for exceptionally able or the exceptionally slow, the college cannot be regarded as truly

"nontraditional." Nontraditionalism, however, does not exclude what we have always thought of as "traditional": it merely incorporates such practices in a total program that, when implemented, produces best results for all students.

A necessary first step in this approach is to review the system's goals and objectives and to evaluate the success with which these goals and objectives are being accomplished. Such review is a cooperative effort, in which component college goals and objectives are weighed against system goals and objectives. Conceivably, the system goals and objectives previously adopted will be found adequate. But if, as may be likely, it is decided that they should be changed or that the relative emphases of some or all of them should be modified, a logical next step is to take stock of the college learning program in relation to accomplishment of the goals and objectives. If this is found wanting, then reorganization is definitely in order.

Taken together, these considerations place the educational leader at the center of a complex and challenging process of change. Adopting an innovative instructional program is a matter very different from replacing worn-out laboratory equipment. It calls for creative planning, for designing and setting in motion an effective plan for staff education, and for skillful leadership in orchestrating the numerous aspects in the process of implementing nontraditional education. Any change in the organizational structure must rely on staff awareness of operational definitions of learning objectives, without which there is no basis for making independent professional decisions concerning the learning program. Moreover, explicit definitions of objectives lead directly into developing means by which to measure the degree to which an objective is being accomplished. None of

this can be done by decree from the top; it has to be a cooperative endeavor from the outset, and at local levels.

The whole point of this discussion--and any other that considers organization for learning--is how to bring students and curricula into effective relation. We've had ample evidence that the so-called "traditional" approach has done the job rather poorly. We're faced now with the question: Can the nontraditional approach serve students better? I think it can, but not unconditionally.

A most important condition for the success of nontraditional education is the development of a sophisticated teacher corps, competent in the basics of instruction that apply to any type of instructional organization but equally conversant with new organizational arrangements for adapting instruction to individual differences, and for enabling each student to attain mastery of learning tasks. To fulfill these purposes, the teaching staff must be thoroughly familiar with the principles and processes involved in continous progress; team teaching; flexibility in scheduling, grouping, and use of space and equipment; and differentiated staffing, including effective utilization of paraprofessionals. But the responsibility for developing a teaching staff with this degree of sophistication rests with the local college administrator--not with the state or regional leader. His role in this regard is to stimulate local support for the over-all goals and objectives of the educational community under his purview, leaving to diversified territorial leadership the implementation of specific enabling objectives.

This process is not quite as simple as it may sound, however, especially when local administrators suspect that their regional or state director is leaping on a bandwagon in an effort to erase public criticism for past

failures--rightly or wrongly attributed to the system. Many local administrators are perfectly sincere in their resistance to change, particularly to change that is grounded in such scanty research as many of today's innovations are. Many are justifiably wary of turning their colleges into proving grounds for what, at best, can be characterized as esoteric theories that still hover around Cloud Nine. Others, fearing the effect of sudden innovation on faculty-administration relations, especially in these days of exaggerated faculty demands for a larger share in the decision-making process, are reluctant to upset the already delicate status quo.

These attitudes are understandable. And it is in this area that the state or regional director can, and must, perform his most skillful service. Sporadic experiments across the country--some successful, some not--are not sufficient to persuade all college staffs that they should expend the necessary time and effort in developing new teaching techniques, or adapting older ones, to fit the requirements of unfamiliar instructional organization plans. A great deal of missionary work may be required on the part of the educational leader if nontraditional education is to be given a fair chance for survival in his area of jurisdiction.

This brings me to the second approach to fostering nontraditional approaches in a state or regional system of community colleges--the establishment of a nontraditional unit within the system.

Most of us are familiar with the university without walls experiments and the external degree institutions established by many states during the past decade. As an illustration of this approach, however, I would like to share with you what we propose to do at Kansas City.

For several years, I have been talking and writing about a concept which I have called the "Community Renewal College." The concept as originally propounded, perhaps focused too much emphasis on the community as a whole rather than the individuals who comprise it; obviously a community tends to decline, and thus be in need of renewal, only as personal obsolescence grows. Because of this, focus should be on human renewal rather than on rejuvenation of the more global entity. Whatever the case, I should like to acquaint you with some of the principles underlying our rethinking of the Community Renewal College concept, vis a vis its implementation as a fourth college of our community college District.

As I envision it, the Community Renewal College, unlike many four-year colleges and universities, will place higher value upon the individual than upon the institution, believing that the higher the degree of individual self-realization, the greater will be the well-being of society at large. Society is only as great and as good as the individuals who comprise it and the Community Renewal College, therefore, will place highest priority on enriching the lives of all of its constituents.

My move to the Metropolitan Kansas City community college District now makes it possible for me to pick up my own challenge and develop further some of the practices tried out and found worthy at Brookdale. With emphasis upon defined competencies and student-college educational pacts that attempt to ensure student achievement of those competencies, it would be possible to bring further education to more people than ever before and thus to validate the concept of "universal higher education." Thus it is our

goal at Kansas City to develop in due course a community college without walls--as a fourth college of the District; a Community Renewal College; a college that would exist without a formal campus; a college that would establish a network of learning sites that offer both formal and informal learning opportunities; a college that would utilize a faculty, not solely of academically credentialled individuals, but of community personnel with demonstrated expertise in their several fields of endeavor, thus making the entire community college District a laboratory for learning; a college that would emphasize multimedia, multimodal, self-instructional learning systems, free scheduled courses--recognizing that what is learned is more important than what is taught.

As a first phase of this undertaking, we have just established a District Institute of Community Services, encompassing all existing community services programs and activities offered independently by District colleges.

Illustrative of the offerings of the new Institute of Community Services is the program of a similar institute at Brookdale. Charged with the responsibility of taking the college to the people, the institute last year operated formal education extension centers located throughout the country, a weekend college on the Lincroft campus, and from one to six classes each in area business, industrial, government, and welfare organizations. The aim was not necessarily to move attending students toward a degree, though this was an available option. The main purpose was to help students to define their competencies--both those they already had and those they wanted to develop--as effective human beings: personally, communicatively, vocationally, and

re-creationally. And, the over-all goal was to teach them how to learn so that, more than merely fostering the desire for lifelong learning, we might give them the tools by which to translate that desire into lifelong actuality.

In addition, the institute provided for numerous other community services of an informal nature. Of particular interest, I think were the activities for developing human resources carried out by the institute's community learning center.

Located in the heart of one of Monmouth County's largest black and Puerto Rican communities, the center is probably Brookdale's most unique community service program. It concentrates on counseling, college-preparatory studies, even college courses for community residents who have economic and educational deficiencies. It provides the nucleus around which we hope to expand the Brookdale version of the "Community Renewal College," though it is only one manifestation of the entire community services concept which actually gave birth to the Community Renewal College idea.

At the center, educational services tailored to the needs of community individuals are provided. There, community members gain useful skills that equip them for more than one vocation. There, they receive consumer education, better understanding of their rights in and relationship to law enforcement, training in basic learning and communication skills, and the high school equivalency diploma. There, nearly 500 individuals, many of them high school dropouts of many years' standing were serviced last year through the general education development and English-as-a-second-language programs.

It isn't the degree the people who pass through the community learning center are seeking: it's personal upgrading and performance skills. Some do enter degree programs, but more find their niches in the world of work,

safe in the knowledge that the doors of the center will always be open when they are again in need of "human renewal."

I am not denigrating the value of the degree. What I am suggesting is that informal education also plays an important role on the stage of many people's lives. Obstacles that prevent an individual's traveling the degree route don't necessarily prevent his learning, and it is in this area that community services make their greatest contribution.

Our new Institute of Community Services will emphasize informal education, and as such will be a center for nontraditional study; it will also be the forerunner of a full blown nontraditional college, which we hope to open in about a year.

## CONCLUSION

It is no longer feasible for the educational leader, whether he be state or regional, to maintain a low profile, communicating with his constituents by periodic bullentins through the mail. He must spearhead a vigorous campaign to educate dubious publics--both college and community--to the values inherent in nontraditional education--particularly for the burgeoning numbers of nontraditional students. He must make himself personally available for large--or small-group discussion, for workshops involving local staffs at all levels, for conferences to reaffirm staff faith in the work their colleges are doing. More particularly, he must become highly visible to the public at large--not as a top-ranking official whose pronouncements are occasionally reported in the press, but as a concerned individual whose job it is to assure students and parents alike on the basis the evidence that their colleges are continually finding and implementing new and better ways to cause learning.

Educational change cannot--and should not-- be sustained by enthusiasm alone. By necessity it must rest on evidence that clearly indicates non-traditional education to be a better way of doing things. As of this moment, empirical evidence points to this being the case. But there is need for basic research to undergird that evidence. Though tacit agreement has been reached that research belongs to the universities and that the community colleges will devote their time to the teaching-learning process, where non-traditionalism is being practiced some attention must be given to research at the level designed to validate the instructional strategies and modes being utilized. The educational leader, therefore, has the responsibility to encourage such research both at the system level and in the community colleges within his jurisdiction in order to prevent the oft-repeated accusation that they are merely following another educational fad to its fizzle. But the need to convince obtuse laymen of the value of basic research often leads both scientists and educators into exaggerations that begin as well-intentioned rhetorical devices but may end in self-delusion. Lest this happen again, it is imperative that the educational leader arrange for provision of both opportunity and funds for on-the-spot research into the applications of nontraditionalism currently being practiced. Whatever the setting for educational experimentation, it is vital in our still profound ignorance to shy away from rigid prescriptions of either goal or technique. At this time of protean growth and change in educational history, the newer designs and aspects of a different kind of college are necessary if we are to achieve the wholesome objectives required in a rapidly changing and much harrassed world.

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